

## Summer... Break

Erin Scherger, Herndon

When I was young, summertime was lazy, slow, and filled with fun. It meant indoor ice-skating during the heat of the day, playing video games at the arcade, and bouncing on a trampoline. It meant playing kickball in the street until the streetlights turned on and tanning until my dad could only find me out in the night if I smiled.

When I was 6 years old, I broke my arm. The neighbors, about five houses down the street, had a set of monkey bars in their backyard: the type with the three-step ladders on either side and then the horizontal ladder across the top. My friends and I thought it would be entertaining to jump from the top step of one side and to see how far out onto the horizontal ladder we could grab. The first rung was a piece of cake; hardly a hop! The second; simplicity itself. The third? Whoops!

When I was 16, I broke my right leg while ice-skating. When I was 38, I was horsing around with my son and broke my right ankle. (Lest you think my twenties were injury-free, they were just devoid of fractures.) Sure, the broken bones hurt. But I was more perturbed at having my plans for fun interrupted and by the incessant itching that developed as my arm (leg, ankle) sweat inside the casts in the heat. But instead of bemoaning my curtailed summer activities, I had permission, an obligation even, to redefine my experiences: I learned to run on crutches (not doctor recommended) and to play mini golf with one arm slung over my head. I used enforced sedentary time to learn to type, to try painting, and to catch up on my to-read list.

These days, summertime is not lazy or slow, nor is there a lot of time for recreation. My to-do list is long and intimidating, and I know I also want to spend precious time with my teens before they scatter to the winds. Summer has not even begun and I already have plans for much of it. But now it appears it's time for another summer of redefined activities and a little slower pace. Another opportunity to take advantage of... a break.

What does summer look like for you? Do you create an ambitious to-do list for your summer? Or perhaps you are eyeing time to catch up from last year's challenges or to get ahead on some school subjects? And perhaps, as you think about that, you also wonder about how you're going to relish these precious summers, as we did in days not-so-long ago. Do you, too, need permission to break away or to take a break in your homeschool? Keep reading!

Try out a simple recipe for creating a unit study that incorporates your summer interests. Or, get out and exercise while the weather is favorable. Too hot to exercise? Head inside to a library and create your own stress-free book club. Word lovers may also enjoy a virtual (then actual) visit to the Edgar Allen Poe Museum or to create their own field journals filled with photos of their homeschooling adventures. Perhaps you would prefer to start planning for a mindful re-entry to the school year by considering time management techniques or ensuring your teen is ready to head off to college. Or perhaps you'd like to take one last summer field trip by trekking to a new location to view a rare total solar eclipse.

Join me as I slow it down for summer and find that elusive balance between "getting it all done" and "making enduring summer memories." Take a break with me (cast not required). Enjoy!

*Erin Scherger is in her 15<sup>th</sup> year of a six-month homeschooling experiment. She lives in Herndon with her homeschooled high-school daughter, her husband, and her hamster, and enjoys confounding medical professionals with her rich and varied medical history.*



Photo by Erin Scherger

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